

panied on the piano by the Society's musician-laureate, Mr. W. W. Carruth. The dinner committee was under the chairmanship of Mr. H. L. Mason.—W. L. JEPSON.

CHARLES RUSSELL ORCUTT, NATURAL HISTORY COLLECTOR.

For something over half a century Charles Russell Orcutt of San Diego has been identified with the desert areas of the southwestern United States and the adjacent regions of Mexico as a professional collector of insects, shells and plants. Botanizing in districts never before traversed, he discovered many new plants in a wide range of families. This material he sold to botanists and institutions. In only a few instances, if memory serves, did he himself publish his own discoveries as new species—and yet he was much given to publication of a kind, especially lists of species. His check list of the "Flora of Southern and Lower California" (13 pages, 1885) was sufficiently creditable in typography and much used by collectors. It was followed by a fuller list, "Botany of Southern California", in 1901 (172 pages). In 1884 he began to print a monthly journal under the caption, *The West American Scientist*. It was at that time the only medium that existed in western America for the publication of natural history notes and short articles and it, therefore, served a useful purpose. Among the contributors were such notable names as C. C. Parry, Edward Lee Greene, T. D. A. Cockerell, Josiah Keep, C. H. Eigenmann, Alice Eastwood and Geo. Vasey. Without pretensions typographically the issues nevertheless maintained a fairly uniform character for about ten years and then trailed off into chiefly advertising leaflets, irregular in size, title, make-up and form, which have been the despair of librarians who felt it a duty to maintain complete files of the journal for their "Californiana". The most happy of his writing efforts are somewhat short articles, contributed mainly to *Garden and Forest*, which give a running account of his own journeys in the desert or of the little-known elements of its flora.

As a collector and publisher Mr. Orcutt became widely known for his zeal and industry and also for his eccentricities and foibles. A characteristic production entitled "American Plants" (3 vols., 1907-1910) is a strange medley which illustrates the author's singularities. All of his publications have, at least, developed the merit of rarity. As a sort of promoter he projected most visionary botanical schemes but practically no botanists were deceived, though often much amused, by them. Although so peculiar in his business dealings with customers, he was not evilly disposed, nor malicious nor vindictive, but rather simple-minded and naive, with an intense devotion to field work which was wholly genuine and unflagging. Through him numerous desert plants, especially Cactaceae, have been introduced into cultivation. The genus *Orcuttia*, which includes two peculiar grasses of California and Lower California, was dedicated to him by Dr. Geo. Vasey and many species bear his name.

Born in Hartland, Vermont, on April 27, 1864, he came in 1879 to San Diego and there made his home for the remainder of his life. While exploring the West Indies he died in Haiti on Aug. 24, 1929.—W. L. JEPSON.

OPEN LETTERS

On *Geraea viscida* (Gray) Blake.

I am sending a package of *Geraea viscida*, including two roots. These plants were collected near Jacumba, California, at about 2800 feet altitude. This *Geraea* grows in hard red clay soil and has a deep tap root. The remains of last year's stems show it to be at least a biennial, but judging from the size and depth of the root I would take it to be a perennial. The way the heads, after anthesis, become abruptly reflexed is worthy of note.—J. B. FEUDGE, May 28, 1927.

Vaccinium ovatum in the Santa Cruz Mountains.

On October 13, 1929 two forms of *Vaccinium* were observed near the Big Basin in the Santa Cruz Mountains. The common kind, *Vaccinium ovatum*, has a perfectly globose fruit without bloom. Please note that the other (var. *saporosum*) has a very pronounced pear-shaped fruit with bloom. The leaves of the pear-shaped one, too, are strikingly darker in color.—H. A. DUTTON, Los Altos.

Rediscovery of *Stipa Stillmanii* Boland. in Placer County

When collecting plants on the Sugar Pine Range, about twelve miles northeast of Forest Hill along the road between the Sugar Pine Ranger Station and Forbes Cattle Camp, I noticed a rather tall grass with plume-like top. It was a new grass to me, so I put several stalks in my press to work with later, not suspecting I had found anything rare. This location is on the road east of Iowa Hill, which is just across the American River Canyon from Colfax and only a few miles in an air line.

After I found that my specimen was *Stipa Stillmanii*, I looked for it around Colfax and eastward, but I have never seen it off the Forest Hill Divide and only in fairly dense shade. Since finding the one clump near the Sugar Pine Station, the ranger has found one other clump. Last week, also, we located another small area on the east slope of the Red Star Ridge, in what is known as "French Meadows", in T 15 N, R 14 E. I am sending some pictures of the last station, showing several of the plants. There are about twelve individual plants here. Jepson's Manual cites Blue Canyon as country in which it is found, but so far I have not seen it there.—LELAND SEYMOUR SMITH, Aug. 1, 1929.